

COLLEGE STUDENT ADAPTABILITY AND GREEK MEMBERSHIP:

A SINGLE INSTITUTION CASE STUDY

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Since the birth of the United States in 1776, Greek-letter societies have been an integral part of American higher education. Research on the impact of Greek membership varies at best, and often is in conflict from study to study.

This study surveyed students affiliated with Greek-letter organizations at the University of North Texas. The research examined the college adaptability of Greek students by gender in five areas: Overall adjustment, academic adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, social adjustment, and attachment to the institution.

The study, conducted in the spring of 2006 at the University of North Texas had 80 respondents. The Student Adaptability to College Questionnaire (SACQ) consisted of 67 items on a 9-point scale. The SACQ is designed to assess how well students adapt to the demands of the college experience. Raw scores and percentile rankings were determined by t-test calculations. Test scores were expressed through t-scores in relation to the standardized sample.

Data show no statistical significance in any of the five areas studied: Overall adjustment, academic adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, social adjustment, or attachment to the institution. Female participants scored higher on all scales than male participants, indicating a slightly higher level of adjustment, though not enough to be significant. Both males and females scored highest in attachment to the institution and social adjustment, while both scored lowest in personal-emotional adjustment.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Academics first. Everything else is secondary. If only college life were that simple. The collegiate experience is dramatically more involved than any black-and-white description of how students should organize and prioritize their time. Student learning extends beyond the boundaries of the classroom in a multitude of ways. When student individuality is respected, along with academic responsibility, the importance of personal development is identified along with intellectual outcomes (Winston & Miller, 1994). Research suggests that these types of outcomes are most affected by peer and faculty involvement (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Astin (1984) contends that for student learning and growth to occur, students should actively engage in their environments. Additionally, Davis and Murrell (1993) concluded that socially involved students further develop general knowledge and intellectual skills and often are more satisfied with the collegiate experience.

How, then, do social Greek-letter organizations fit into the picture? When reviewing the research on social fraternities and sororities on college campuses, one finds numerous questions on the importance of the Greek system, but to some extent, very few answers. The conflicting evidence (Pace, 1990; Pike, 1995; Pike, 1996; Whitt et al. 1999), limited sample sizes (Mathiasen, 2005), and generalizations (Pascarella et al, 1996) lead researchers to a common conclusion: There is much that we simply do not know. Detailed, longitudinal studies which examine a broad cross-section of the

United States and Canada and which represent small, large, public, private, liberal arts, religious, traditional and non-traditional campuses are called for. Can this be done? If institutions are intent on determining the impact of such organizations, it must be done. Literary journals, campus administration, faculty, and Greeks themselves each possess individual ideas regarding what a Greek community is capable of. But shouldn't these publics at least be armed with real information?

From nearly the beginning, American higher education has had an obligation to respond to students' desires to congregate socially. Students have chosen many ways in which to do this, one of the most common being the formation of clubs and organizations. Through the co-curricular aspects of college life, students gain leadership experience from involvement in athletics, Greek-letter organizations, general clubs and organizations, and service and volunteer activities. Each of these activities provides students with opportunities to develop and enhance specific leadership skills. Greek organizations, in particular, have a history as lengthy as that of the United States and have been at the forefront of the co-curricular movement since the late 1700s. Though students in other countries have societies or clubs, only in America does the concept of the Greek-letter fraternity exist (Capps, 1978).

"The appearance of fraternities on the campuses of North America is not the result of an historical accident, but rather, the Greek-letter societies have been an ongoing and important facet of the larger student self-government and co-curricular movements. The Greek-letter movement seems to meet enduring needs of some students. Because of its success over many generations, it probably cannot be

characterized as a mere phase in the evolution of the student self-government” (Burns, 1989, p. 21).

A number of factors have warranted student affairs professionals to commit to working with Greek organizations in efforts to promote positive contributions to student development. The historical presence of fraternities and sororities on American college campuses, and the high level of alumni attachment to the organizations, serve to represent the past and the future of the academy. Greeks also deserve attention due to the major influence they exert on campus climate and their potential to positively affect the quality of student life (Winston, Nettles, & Oppen, 1987). Conversely, institutions are highly aware of the glaring negative aspects that sometimes are associated with Greek organizations. The relationship between the fraternity and the campus is an important one. To promote the positive aspects of Greek membership and minimize the potential problems, institutions should establish a supportive atmosphere and attitudes toward fraternities and sororities that will maximize the benefits of Greek membership. It becomes a responsibility of both institution and local and national Greek leadership to work in partnership to ensure the Greek experience is one that is in the best interest of all constituents.

The Greek experience in its prime can facilitate a myriad of opportunities for members. Greek membership assists in the development of mature interpersonal relationships and enhances leadership skills. Membership also helps students gain a higher appreciation for teamwork and stimulates lively exchanges of ideas. Further, membership in a fraternity or sorority promotes the importance of values, while

facilitating a sense of autonomy, self governance, and personal identity. With this type of potential, fraternities and sororities have the opportunity to make major contributions to an institution's efforts to develop students in ways congruent with institutional missions and values. Greek organizations do this while maximizing the powerful influence of the student peer group (Winston & Saunders, 1987).

Greek life, unfortunately, is not without its downside. While institutions generally agree with the positive influences associated with Greek membership, the challenges cannot be ignored. Although to varying degrees, instances exist of alcohol and drug use, hazing, irresponsible behavior, destruction of property, poor academic performance by some groups, and risky sexual behavior. "While it is unfair and inaccurate to make these kinds of charges against all Greeks, the incidences are frequent enough to maintain negative stereotypes in the public mind and to raise questions in the minds of academicians about whether Greek systems do in fact promote the ideals of an academic community and a democratic society" (Winston & Saunders, 1987, p.6).

There still are many unanswered questions regarding the importance of the Greek community. Chief among those questions is this: Is the Greek system worth fighting for? This study addressed the history of fraternal organizations, levels of significance of such organizations, challenges facing the Greek community, and most importantly, how students belonging to Greek-letter organizations adjust to college.

### Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to identify the overall, academic, social, and personal-emotional adjustment, as well as institutional attachment of students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations at the University of North Texas.

### Purposes of Study

The purposes of this study were to:

1. Describe the college adjustment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations.
2. Investigate the academic adjustment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations.
3. Determine the social adjustment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations
4. Ascertain the personal-emotional adjustment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations
5. Explore the institutional attachment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations
6. Determine the adjustment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations.
7. Investigate the academic adjustment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations.

8. Describe the social adjustment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations.
9. Estimate the personal-emotional adjustment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations.
10. Explore the institutional attachment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations.

#### Research Questions

- 1) What is the college adjustment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?
- 2) What is the academic adjustment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?
- 3) What is the social adjustment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?
- 4) What is the personal-emotional adjustment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?
- 5) What is the institutional attachment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?
- 6) What is the college adjustment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?
- 7) What is the academic adjustment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?

- 8) What is the social adjustment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?
- 9) What is the personal-emotional adjustment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?
- 10) What is the institutional attachment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?

### Significance of Study

Across the United States, Greek organizations come under fire for incidents that garner public and media attention. While it is difficult for institutions to argue against the philanthropic impact and contribution to campus life, questions often remain regarding the justification of Greek life. Do Greek organizations support the mission and values of the institution? Do Greek organizations live up to the ideals upon which they were founded? Answering these questions may prove to be a lengthy task, but one that will be well worth the effort. As Greek organizations continue to come under close scrutiny by administrators and the general public, it is necessary to provide ongoing research that will assist all constituencies in forming accurate conclusions based on valid research.

More specifically, this study has significance for both future practice and future research. In terms of professional practice, the results might be useful to student affairs practitioners, students attending higher education institutions, and future employers of graduates. For student affairs practitioners, this study provides information about



college student adaptation for a specific group of students who are highly visible and instrumental on college campuses. Student affairs professionals might also use this information to assess integration efforts on their own campuses.

Students attending colleges and universities might also benefit from this study. The data reveal Greek-affiliated students' adaptability to the college environment. Students might use these findings to assist in their decision of whether or not the Greek community is one of which they choose to be a part.

Employers of graduates might find information from this study helpful as well. The study provides information about the levels at which Greek-affiliated students adapt to a new environment. Employers might use this information to help determine what they should expect from their college interview candidates concerning their ability to adjust to new environments with unfamiliar stresses.

This study also has implications for future research. Other scholars may wish to replicate this study, and researchers may choose to expand this study longitudinally. For example, one could investigate the adaptability of students during a four-year time span. Such studies might reveal specific times within a collegiate career that Greek-affiliated students show higher levels of adjustment. Additionally, a comparative study might be conducted in which Greek students are examined alongside non-Greek students.

Results of this study could also lead to research that examines other student organizations and programs, such as first-year experience programs. Such a study

would examine first-year experience program participants with respect to their college adaptability compared to non-first-year experience program participants.

### Definition of Terms

1. Active: an initiated member of a Greek organization who is currently enrolled as an undergraduate.
2. Alumna: a sorority member who is no longer a student. The plural is "alumnae."
3. Alumnus ("Alum"): a fraternity member who is no longer a student. The plural is "alumni".
4. Bid: an invitation to join a fraternity or sorority.
5. Bid matching: a system for matching the choice of the potential new member with the choice of the chapter.
6. Chapter: the campus group of a national organization.
7. Chapter advisor: an alumnus/alumna who establishes and maintains a close advisory relationship with a chapter and serves as a teacher, counselor, and friend.
8. COB (Continuous open bidding): a continuous, open recruitment period with no specific, scheduled, system-wide activities. Bids may be extended and accepted at any time.
9. Colony: an approved student organization working toward recognition as chartered chapter of a Greek-letter organization.
10. Formal recruitment: the primary selection period of the year for primarily first year students. Specific scheduled events for entertaining and selecting new

members are known as "Recruitment Week."

11. Fraternity: the name informally applied to a Greek-letter men's organization.
12. Greek/Greeks: a term applied to students affiliated with Greek-letter social fraternities and sororities.
13. Hazing: any willful act or practice by a member or associate member, directed against a member or associate member, which, with or without intent, is likely to cause bodily harm or danger, offensive punishment, or disturbing pain, compromise the person's dignity; cause embarrassment or shame in public; cause the person to be the object of malicious amusement or ridicule; cause psychological harm or substantial emotional strain; and impair academic efforts. In addition, hazing is any requirement by a member or new member, which compels a member or associate member to participate in any activity that is illegal, contrary to a member or associate member's moral or religious beliefs, or contrary to the rules and regulations of the fraternity, institution of learning, and civil authorities. Statute may vary slightly by state.
14. Initiation: A formal ceremony by which new members become initiated members.
15. Interfraternity Council (IFC): The governing council made up of all fraternities on a campus.
16. Legacy: the child, sibling or grandchild (or in some cases, other relative) of an initiated fraternity or sorority member.
17. Latino Greek Council (LGC): the governing council of all fraternities and sororities on campus, representing any of the National Association of Latin

Fraternal Organizations (NALFO).

18. Local fraternity: "Local" - a Greek-letter group which exists on a campus but which has no affiliation with a national Greek organization.
19. National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations (NALFO): the umbrella council for the 22 national Latino Greek-letter organizations.
20. National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC): The governing council made up of the historically African-American chapters.
21. New member: a member of a Greek organization who has not yet been initiated.
22. National Panhellenic Conference (NPC): is a group composed of delegates from each of the 26 national women's fraternities who meet together periodically to discuss and rule on issues of common interest and concern.
23. Panhellenic: the governing council of all sororities on a campus, representing chapters of any of the 26 NPC organizations.
24. Philanthropy: an active effort, project or service to promote human welfare or the raising of funds to be donated for that purpose.
25. Potential new member (PNM): a non-member, with a possible interest in affiliating with one organization and is eligible to participate in the fraternity or sorority recruitment events.
26. Recruitment: A series of events offering members and potential members the opportunity to get to know each other.
27. Sovereign rights: the basic rights of fraternities and sororities as private voluntary organizations that cannot be precluded by other agents or entities, e.g.,

the right to be single gender organizations.

### Assumptions

The following assumptions were made in this study:

1. The instrument used was valid and reliable.
2. Survey respondents truthfully responded to the survey instrument.

### Limitations

The following limitations applied to this study:

1. A random sample was not achieved. Some students attending selected meetings elected not to participate.
2. The study was subject to honesty and the halo effect (the respondents' tendency to answer statements in ways they believe the researcher prefers).

### Delimitations

The following delimitations applied to this study:

1. The research was limited to a single-institution case study; therefore, the results may not hold true for other institutions. The fact that all participants attend the same institution limits the generalization of the present findings.
2. Only 29 of the 123 Greek-letter organizations were represented on the campus of the study (representative of the National Interfraternity Conference, National

Panhellenic Conference, National Pan-Hellenic Council, and National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations).

3. Participants were limited to those attending the meetings at which the survey is administered.

4. The selected instrument has its own set of limitations. The first is its transparency of purpose. It is easily apparent to anyone viewing the questionnaire that it is intended to determine the effectiveness of a student's adjustment to college. Second, the norms are based on data from one college. Although subsequent studies suggest these findings generalize to other institutions, suitability of the normative or other psychometric data for other populations should not be taken for granted. Finally, one should be hesitant to place too much interpretive value on individual item responses. Individual item responses should never be interpreted out of context.

5. With unlimited financial resources, the study might have produced different results. Utilizing a professionally-developed instrument bears a greater financial investment for the researcher, thus limiting the sample size. Unlimited financial resources would allow for a greater sample size.

### Organization of Study

In Chapter 1, a brief overview is presented of the relationship between Greek-letter organizations and their host institutions. The chapter also identifies the problem, the purposes, and the significance of the study. The research questions are presented along with the limitations of the study and definition of terms.

Chapter II contains a review of the related literature.

Chapter III describes the research methodology. A description of the population of the study is included and the survey instrument is discussed. Finally, the research design and procedures for the collection and analysis of data are described.

Chapter IV presents the analysis of data collected. Presentations of tables, statistical analysis, interpretation, and results of data collected are included.

Chapter V presents a summary and discussion of the major findings, conclusions of the study, and recommendations for future research and practice.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Fraternities and sororities are an unparalleled phenomenon in North America. With collegiate chapters found only in the United States and Canada, Greek-letter organizations are a unique breed in the history of collegiate life. For nearly 120 years, students have had the opportunity to be a part of Greek life. And, because of their uniqueness, researchers and university administrators still seem to be grasping at how to best analyze Greek organizations.

#### History of Greek-Letter Organizations

The year 1776 was one of new beginnings. The United States of America was born and Phi Beta Kappa became the first American society bearing a Greek-letter name. On December 5, at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, the second oldest educational institution in America, the story begins. Formed for social and literary purposes, "Phi Beta Kappa had all of the characteristics of the present-day fraternity: The charm and mystery of secrecy, a ritual, oaths of fidelity, a group, a motto, a badge for external display, a background of high idealism, a strong tie of friendship and comradeship, an urge for sharing its values through nation-wide expansion" (Baird, 1977, p. 5). Phi Beta Kappa's expansion to other campuses took place in 1779 at Harvard and Yale. When the fraternity only had only five chapters



after a half century, it shifted focus and became strictly an honor fraternity (Capps, 1978).

By selecting Greek letters and mottoes to represent themselves, students could identify with the glories of this ancient civilization—its athleticism, art, literature, philosophy, and democratic values. For these students, it was something quite familiar; Classical Greek and Latin classics were central to American private higher education from the inception of the academy until early in the twentieth century (Sanua, 1998).

Many of the earliest fraternities developed in response to the near complete control that faculty exerted over students. Most began as literary societies, but eventually became more social in nature to fill both the social and emotional needs of students (Rudolph, 1990). Additionally, most of the early fraternities operated in secrecy, due in part to the distrust of the faculty and trustees of anything initiated by the students themselves (Dalglish, 1936). Many looked at the history of Greek-letter organizations as an example of students attempting to take a greater role in the governance of the college or university. In response to this desire, Union College students in Schenectady, New York founded the first officially recognized men's fraternity, Kappa Alpha Society, in 1825 (Robson, 1976). Although not welcomed by the faculty, students eagerly met the fraternity's establishment. Resembling Phi Beta Kappa in many ways, the small organization made a large impact on the campus (Capps, 1978). Fraternities quickly became the most important social factor in the lives of men. Chapters spread throughout the country as fast as colleges were established (Dalglish, 1936).

The growth of the fraternity movement began in the southern part of the United States in the late 1700's with chapters in Virginia, North Carolina, Louisiana, and Alabama. In the early 1800s, additional fraternities were established in the northern part of the United States. During the Civil War, collegiate activity weakened and was virtually non-existent in the South. Many fraternities did not survive. But in the aftermath of war came a time of massive fraternity expansion, both in the development of new fraternities and in the addition of chapters to the already-established organizations. As many as 37 fraternities document their founding during this period after the Civil War (Baird, 1977). Development of additional fraternities did not cease with the ending of the nineteenth century. In 1914, *Baird's Manual of American College Fraternities* (1977) documented more than seventy national Greek-letter organizations for men and women by the beginning of the First World War. Found on more than five-hundred campuses, their combined membership exceeded 350,000 with chapter homes valuing more than thirteen million dollars.

In the early 1870s, college fraternities began to serve another need. Chapter houses with dining facilities were erected. Most college administrations did not assume direct responsibility for the room and board of its students, leaving them to seek their own housing. Although college officials had previously resisted the fraternities because of their secrecy and rebelliousness, they now found it appealing to allow the organizations to house and feed students and regulate their behavior. Often the institutions partnered with fraternities by granting them land and guaranteeing their mortgages. Another advantageous by-product for the colleges was increased alumni

involvement. It was quickly learned that wealthy alumni became interested and involved when chapter house building campaigns took place (Sanua, 1998).

Prior to the Civil War, women rarely sought higher education. In 1862, however, the Morrill Act established land-grant institutions that created more opportunities for women to pursue higher education (Solomon, 1985). As the number of women grew, they too formed their own secret societies, often patterning them after the fraternities. Although some women were admitted as members of men's fraternities, it was clear that there was a distinct need for similar organizations specifically for women. The founding of Pi Beta Phi in 1867 in Monmouth, Illinois, was the first of the official women's fraternities. Alpha Delta Pi, however, was the first known sisterhood, having been founded as the Adelpian Society in 1951 (Baird, 1977).

The term "sorority" was not popularized until later in the 19th century, so most were founded as "women's fraternities" or "fraternities for women." The first national organization to adopt the word "sorority" was Gamma Phi Beta, established in 1874. During the 1870s, five more women's groups emerged and laid the foundation for the 26 international women's fraternities today (Baird, 1977).

In 1902, the women's fraternities formed the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC), a national umbrella organization currently consisting of twenty-six national and international women's fraternities. And in 1906, after an examination of the fraternity system, a group of African-American men established Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., at Cornell University, to provide Black students with fraternal support and educational enrichment. This began the Black fraternal movement and in 1908 the first historically

African-American women's sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc., was formed at Howard University, which would later see the founding of four other Black fraternal organizations (Wesley, 1961).

While the Black fraternal groups shared many similarities with their predecessors, the particular needs of Black students in general made the history of Black Greek-letter organizations distinct. Although the numbers of African-Americans attending universities in the early twentieth century was growing, the numbers were still quite small. This created a special need to form social bonds with each other that was traditionally inherent in the nature of Greek-letter societies (Giddings, 1988). These Black Greek-letter organizations focused on scholarship as well; Alpha Phi Alpha began as a literary society. While a few Blacks were initiated into Phi Beta Kappa by the 1920s, membership remained fairly exclusive. Therefore, the Black fraternities and sororities served as symbols of academic excellence. Along with their educational purposes, the organizations served to expose Black students to broader collegiate experiences (Kimbrough, 1997).

Although six of the nine Black fraternities and sororities were founded at historically black institutions, the early growth was on predominantly White campuses. Here there was a stronger need for a haven against discrimination. Even housing had greater implications; the only campus housing available for Black students was the fraternity or sorority houses. While students were allowed to attend the institution, they were not yet allowed to live in the dormitories (Giddings, 1988).

The Greek movement grew at a rapid pace in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Rudolph, 1990) and there became a need for governing bodies across the various fraternity lines. Additionally, college presidents, deans of men and women, and other student personnel professionals saw a need for a collective body to deal with Greek issues. In 1909, seven years after the NPC was created for women's groups, the National Inter-fraternity Conference (NIC) was founded in an attempt to provide direction to the national fraternity movement. Presently, the NIC consists of sixty-four men's fraternities. The National Pan-Hellenic Council, Inc., (NPHC) became the governing body of the historically black fraternities and sororities in 1929; nine organizations are currently affiliated.

World War II had a large impact on the fraternity movement, when large numbers of men and women went back to college on the GI bill. Many of these students were attracted to fraternity life. As a result, membership numbers grew rapidly in the 1950s and 1960s. Fraternities assumed an even greater role in the housing of students as well, because existing residence halls could not support the large influx of students. This growth rate continued until the mid-1960s when the war in Vietnam and student unrest slowed the fraternity movement. However, in the early 1970s, students regained confidence in themselves and interest in the community of fraternity was revived (Baird, 1977).

As the Hispanic student population began to increase in the 1970s, so too did the need for community. Latino fraternities and sororities emerged on college campuses as a result of students seeking organizations that understood their roots, traditions, and

needs. In December of 1975 a group of Latino students at Kean University in New Jersey convened to discuss the formation of a Latino Greek organization. Thus, the men formed Lambda Theta Phi Fraternidad Latina, Inc., and the women formed Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Inc. Both organizations are the first and oldest Hispanic-based Greek organizations (Greek 101: A Brief History, 2006, para.2).

In the early 1980s numerous Latino-based fraternities and sororities were developed. While these organizations were founded as Latino-based organizations, membership remained open to all cultures, thus serving as home to students from other ethnic origins (Greek 101: A Brief History, 2006, para.3).

In 1981, Mu Sigma Upsilon was formed as the first multicultural sorority in the nation. Today, in addition to Black, Latino, and multicultural organizations, there are organizations established to serve the needs of Asian and South Asian students. However, no national governing body currently exists (Greek 101: A Brief History, 2006, para.4). The National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations, Inc. (NALFO) was established in 1998 to serve as a nationwide support system for Latino fraternity and sorority members. For many years, Latino Greeks lacked basic information about their peers. As organizations expanded into different states and the Internet made information more readily available, Latino fraternity and sorority leaders worked to form a coalition (NASPA online). In 1997, these leaders organized a series of meetings around the country to pave the way for what would become NALFO. In January 2001, NALFO again made history when it merged with another national Latino Greek council, Concilio Nacional de Hermandades Latinas (CNHL), to form the only national umbrella

organization for historically Latino fraternities and sororities. Currently, NALFO includes twenty-four organizations from around the United States (NALFO, 2002, para.1-2).

Currently, the NIC, NPC, NPHC, and NALFO represent 123 national and international men's and women's fraternal organizations. More than 700,000 undergraduate members can be found on college campuses in the United States and Canada. Additionally, more than 10,000,000 alumni reach around the world with fraternal bonds (Butler, 1999). With numbers like these, it is important to determine how institutions can work alongside national/international headquarters to ensure the continued existence of this longstanding piece of collegiate history.

#### Greek Organizations and Student Development Research

Research regarding Greek membership shows varying results. On one hand, Greek affiliation has been an indicator of higher levels of satisfaction with college (Pennington, Zvonkovic, & Wilson, 1989; Pike & Askew, 1990; Pascarella, Flowers & Whitt, 2001), as well as the ability to operate more productively in group settings (Pike & Askew, 1990; Pascarella, Flowers & Whitt, 2001). Additionally, Greek students reflect higher retention and graduation rates, compared to their non-Greek counterparts (Astin, 1975; Pascarella, Flowers & Whitt, 2001). A study by Sermersheim (1996) investigated leadership experiences on work-related and personal life skill development among students involved in Greek-letter fraternities and sororities. Ninety-five percent of the students surveyed felt their undergraduate Greek leadership positions and involvements in the Greek community were extremely beneficial. Ninety-five percent of

the students surveyed also felt that their Greek leadership position had prepared them for their chosen professions.

On the other hand, higher levels of alcohol consumption (Tampke, 1990; Wechsler, Kuh, & Davenport, 1996; Danielson, Taylor, & Hartford, 2001; Pascarella, Flowers & Whitt, 2001), decreased moral reasoning (Sanders, 1990; Kilgannon & Erwin, 1992; Pascarella, Flowers & Whitt, 2001), lower levels of academic achievement (Blimling, 1993; Pike & Askew, 1990), and unsafe sexual activity (Danielson, Taylor & Hartford, 2001) have been identified as negative behaviors associated with Greek Life.

### *Alcohol*

Although the research regarding the effects of Greek membership is conflicting, alcohol abuse tends to be the most consistent finding. Danielson, Taylor, and Hartford (2001) found a difference between the Greek subculture and the general student population. According to their extensive review of the literature, drinking attitudes and behaviors are embedded in the physical, cognitive, emotional, and cultural aspects of Greek students' lives.

Eberhardt, Rice, and Smith (2003) found that Greek students reported using alcohol more often and in greater amounts, and then participating in risky behaviors or experiencing negative consequences from their drinking than non-Greek students. However, when gender was accounted for, Greek men were found to use alcohol more often than women and experienced more negative effects than Greek women.

While a broad variance in drinking frequencies exist within both Greek and non-Greek populations, a well-documented relationship is maintained between Greek



membership and intensity of drinking (Danielson, Taylor & Hartford, 2001; Engs & Hanson; Engs, Kraft, & Kaplan, 1989). Examples include:

- “43.6% of non-Greek students, compared to 19.3% of fraternity and sorority members, reported no alcohol use in the past 30 days” (Alva, 1998).
- “10% of the non-Greek students, compared to 20% of fraternity and sorority members, are heavy drinkers” (Haworth-Hoeppner et al., 1989).
- “As many as 47% of those residing in a Greek house reported themselves as heavy drinkers, compared to 14% among students at large” (Haworth-Hoeppner et al., 1989).
- Fraternity members are three times more likely to increase from a low to a high frequency of drinking as they move from high school to college; sorority members are five times more likely to experience this change (Lo & Globetti, 1995).

Although research shows a link between Greek membership and alcohol abuse, it does not necessarily show causation. Lo and Globetti (1995) ask the question, “Is a more excessive drinking pattern an antecedent or a consequence of Greek membership?” (p. 1315). In pre-college alcohol studies, results demonstrate that the extent of high school drinking is a major predictor of college drinking (Goodwin, 1992). Furthermore, “students who drink relatively frequently, in higher quantities, and who experience alcohol-related problems while in high school are more likely than others to join a fraternity or sorority in college” (Lo & Globetti, 1995; O’Connor et al., 1996; Werner & Greene, 1992). “Werner and Green’s (1992) study shows that 93% of those

reporting frequent bingeing expressed an intent to join a fraternity or sorority. Thus, this literature suggests that, at a minimum, a more excessive high school drinking pattern is associated with, and is a predictor of, Greek affiliation” (Danielson, Taylor & Hartford, 2001, p.456). Therefore, “while the Greek culture provides opportunity and a permissive environment, there is a subset of high school students who come to college with a receptivity, if not a desire, for this culture” (Danielson, Taylor & Hartford, 2001, p.461).

### *Academics*

The effect of Greek membership on academic achievement is somewhat murky, based on previous research. Conflicting results leave this aspect of research in need of further review. On one hand, “researchers have concluded that Greek membership during the first year of college has a negative effect on cognitive development, especially for men and especially regarding critical thinking,” (Whipple, 1998, p.32). Additionally, Pascarella, et al., (1996) contend that “involvement in fraternities (and to a lesser extent sororities), during this period may seriously detract from time required to become successfully integrated into academic life” (p.32). Kuh, Pascarella, and Wechsler (1996) report negative effects of academic involvement linked to Greek membership.

In a recent study, DeBard, Lake & Binder (2006) found that both male and female Greek students scored lower in nearly all academic measures examined: High school grade point average, fall and spring college grade point average, cumulative

college grade point average, predicted college grade point average and hours earned. The measure in which Greek members, both male and female, scored higher was on retention rate. A significant advantage existed for Greek men and women when comparing retention rates.

On the other hand, Winston and Saunders (1987) conclude that membership does not seem to hinder or enhance academic performance. Further, in a longitudinal study of more than 6,000 seniors, Pike and Askew (1990) found that Greek students reported higher levels of academic effort, but significantly lower total scores on the College Outcome Measures Program (COMP) objective test (Forrest & Steele, 1982) than their non-Greek counterparts (Pike, 2000). This 2000 study by Pike did not find the negative effects of fraternity or sorority membership on academic involvement as reported by Kuh, Pascarella, and Wechsler (1996).

"The most consistent finding," according to Winston and Saunders (1987) "is that membership in a Greek-letter organization has minimal or no effect on academic achievement, at least as measured by grade point averages" (p.7). Pike (2000) asserts that "because research using objective tests of student learning found lower levels of cognitive development for Greeks, whereas the study using self-reported gains found higher levels of cognitive development for Greeks, it is tempting to attribute differences in the research finding is to differences in measurement methods" (p.119).

### *Involvement, Integration and Adaptability*

Astin's research and theory of involvement (1977, 1984) has prompted a number of studies regarding student involvement in higher education. According to Astin (1996), the three most powerful forms of involvement are academic involvement, involvement with faculty, and involvement with student peer groups. Astin further states that the strongest single source of influence on cognitive and affective development is a student's peer group; the greater the interaction with peers, the more favorable the outcome.

Student organization involvement has also been shown to correlate positively with several areas of psychosocial development (Foubert & Granger, 2006). A study by Cooper, Healy, and Simpson (1994) specifically found that juniors who were members of student organizations scored higher than nonmembers on such factors as educational involvement, career planning, lifestyle planning, cultural participation, and academic autonomy. Further, the researchers found that first-year students who join student organizations have higher scores on developing purpose than those who are not associated with an organization or club.

Foubert and Grainger (2006) recently determined that "by their senior year, students involved in clubs and organizations had statistically significant higher levels of development in establishing and clarifying purpose, educational involvement, career planning, lifestyle management, and cultural participation than they did at the beginning of their first year and at the beginning of their sophomore year" (p.175).

Pike and Askew (1990) found that Greek students reported higher levels of involvement in organizations and interaction with other students. However, the researchers caution that “too great an emphasis on social involvement may actually hamper integration if the social involvement is superficial or if the social involvement prevents the students from devoting the time needed to integrate diverse curricular and co-curricular experiences” (p.137). Winston and Saunders (1987) also note that “students who invest their time and energy in the campus environment tend to develop a psychological attachment to the institution and a commitment to the educational process” (p.8).

Addressing several areas of collegiate life, a study of approximately 600 freshmen and 1000 seniors at the University of Missouri—Columbia found that Greek students reported substantially higher levels of academic and social involvement than did non-Greek students (Student Life Studies, 1997). Additionally, Greek freshmen reported making substantially greater gains in interpersonal skill development than did non-Greek freshmen. Finally, Greek seniors reported making significantly greater gains in general education, intellectual development, and interpersonal skills.

A positive aspect of Greek membership that is seldom disputed relates to retention. “Numerous studies have found that members of fraternities and sororities were much more likely to remain in college and ultimately to receive a bachelor’s degree” (Winston & Saunders, 1987). A history of research shows that students affiliated with Greek-letter organizations are less likely to withdraw from school and that membership has a positive impact on a student’s sense of belonging on a college

campus; this can lead to increased retention rates (Willingham, 1962; Alfert, 1966; Astin, 1975, 1977; Bryson, 1965; DeBard, Lake, & Binder, 2006). Greek students are more likely to have higher rates of satisfaction with their collegiate experience than non-Greek students (Gamble, 1962; Astin, 1975, 1977). "The research data should be gratifying to those who view Greek Life as an important way of creating a bond between the student and the institution" (DeBard et al., 2006, p.62). In DeBard, Lake, and Binders's recent study (2006), it was found that Greek women have a retention rate of 84% compared to 74% among their non-Greek counterparts. Similarly, Greek men were found to have an 83% retention rate compared to 71% for non-Greek men. Finally, Astin (1977) says, "fraternity and sorority membership has a substantial positive effect on persistence, overall satisfaction with college, and satisfaction with instruction and social life" (p.222).

Consistent with theory and research, membership in a Greek organization is associated with higher levels of involvement (Astin, 1977, 1993; Baier & Whipple, 1990; Baird, 1969; Pike & Askew, 1990; Thorson, 1997), particularly social involvement. Greater involvement, in turn, is associated with greater gains in general cognitive abilities (Pike, 2000).

### *Alumni*

Research conducted by the National Inter-fraternity Council and the National Panhellenic Conference in 1997 found that fraternity and sorority members are more likely to volunteer and participate in community activities during adulthood. The

research also indicated that members of Greek-letter organizations are more likely to contribute financially to charitable and nonprofit organizations as well as religious groups than their non-Greek counterparts, and they do so in larger amounts. Additionally, the study found that alumni of Greek-letter organizations are more satisfied with their social development during college (Thorsen, 1997).

### College Student Adaptability

The transition from high school to college presents a multitude of challenges, even for the best students. While some students adjust well to the college environment, others struggle with the transition; some leave school entirely. Exciting for some and daunting for others, the entrance into college “involves transition in personal development, separation from family and friends, development of new interpersonal relationships, examination of values, and acceptance of new responsibilities” (Erikson, 1963, 1968). Pascarella and Terrenzini (1991) have confirmed the assumption that college environments perceived as supportive are linked with increased adjustment and higher achievement.

Students attending residential institutions are generally living on their own for the first time, so they are faced with simultaneously adapting to the intensity of college academics and new social responsibilities (Holmstrom, Karp, & Gray, 2002). For many, “it might even be the first time they have the responsibility of waking themselves up for classes, getting along with roommates, making new friends, or confronting choices about dating and drinking” (Smith & Wertlieb, 2005. p. 154). The lack of collaboration

between high schools and colleges, unfortunately, leaves students with misconceptions about the college environment. These misconceptions ultimately have implications for student adjustment to college both academically and socially (Kirst & Venezia, 2004).

College adjustment research also suggests that residential first-year students are more concerned with changes in their daily routines than with the academic demands of college (Holmstrom et al., 2002). Further, students with pessimistic expectations are more likely to have a difficult time adjusting to the university when compared to those who are optimistic. They demonstrate a higher degree of stress and exhibit more depressive symptoms (Smith & Wertlieb, 2005). The way in which students cope with the stresses of college may have an effect on their adjustment to college. DeGrauw and Norcross (1989) contend that more active coping styles are related to more positive adaptation to college.

Tinto (1993) has suggested that student attrition is a direct outcome of a lack of integration into the academic and social communities of the institution. Greater social and academic integration may lead to a greater commitment to educational goals and to the institution, which ultimately influences the likelihood of students to persist. Pascarella and Terrenzini (1983) also found that academic integration relates to persistence and institutional commitment, but that social integration only relates to institutional commitment.

In summary, Astin (1993) concludes that "the student's peer group is the single most potent source of influence on the growth and development in the undergraduate years" (Fussell, 2000, p. 606). While hundreds of thousands of students, then, are



living and learning with fellow Greek brothers and sisters, it is critical that administrators and national Greek leadership ensure that the experiences are valuable and positive.

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURES FOR THE COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### Introduction

This study examined four areas of college adaptability of students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations: academic, social, personal-emotional, and goal commitment-institutional attachment.

#### Instrumentation

The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) was the instrument selected for the study. The SACQ (Baker & Siryk, 1999) is a self-report questionnaire designed to measure four areas of student adjustment to college: 1) academic, 2) social, 3) personal-emotional, and 4) goal commitment-institutional attachment. According to Baker and Siryk, the basis for the SACQ is that student adjustment to college is multifaceted in that it involves varying demands and requires a variety of coping responses (or adjustments) that vary in effectiveness. The SACQ is designed to assess how well a student is adapting to the demands of the college experience.

The 67-item questionnaire is rated on a 9-point scale (*1 = doesn't apply to me at all, 9 = applies very closely to me*). The SACQ consists of five basic scores: the full scale score, based on all 67 items, and four subscale scores, each based on 15-24 items. The subscale scores measure academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment to the institution. The items are scored in the

direction of positive adjustment to college, therefore, the higher the score, the better the student's self-evaluated adaptation to college.

#### *Academic Adjustment Subscale*

The Academic Adjustment subscale contains 20 items and measures the educational characteristics of students, including a student's success in coping with the various educational demands characteristic of the college experience. The Academic Adjustment subscale is classified into four clusters: motivation, application, performance, and academic environment.

#### *Social Adjustment Subscale*

The Social subscale contains 20 items as well and measures multiple aspects of interpersonal and social demands on students. The Social Adjustment subscale is classified into four clusters: general, other people, nostalgia, and social environment.

#### *Personal-Emotional Subscale*

The Personal-Emotional subscale includes 15 items which assess the psychological and physical state of students. This subscale focuses on students' intra-psychic states during the adjustment to college, and the degree to which students experience general psychological distress and concomitant somatic problems. The subscale is divided into two item clusters, psychological and physical.

### *Institutional Attachment Subscale*

The Institutional Attachment subscale consists of 12 items that assess the degree of commitment toward the educational institution. The six items that are exclusive to this subscale (eight are shared with the Social Adjustment subscale and one with the Academic subscale), plus one of the items reflected on the Social Adjustment subscale, are divided into two item clusters, "general" and "this college."

Some items within the questionnaire relate to more than one subscale. Additionally, Questionnaire Item 53 (I feel I have good control over my life situation at college) and Item 67 (I feel confident that I will be able to deal in a satisfactory manner with future challenges here at college) are not scored on any subscale, and contribute to the full scale score only.

The SACQ yields full-scale scores as an index of overall adjustment to the university. The internal reliability coefficients for the full scale range from .92 to .95. Alpha coefficients for the individual subscales range from: .81 to .90 for the Academic Adjustment subscale, .83 to .91 for the Social Adjustment subscale, .77 to .86 for the Personal-Emotional Adjustment subscale, and .85 to .91 for the Institutional Attachment subscale.

Participants were instructed to complete each scale thoroughly and honestly and to utilize as much time as needed for full completion. The approximate time to complete the questionnaire was 20 minutes.

### Population of the Study

Participants for the study were members of the campus Greek community at the University of North Texas during the spring semester, 2006. All four Greek councils were represented: Inter-fraternity Council (IFC), Latino Greek Council (LGC), National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), and Panhellenic. All participants were enrolled students at the University of North Texas, a doctorate-granting institution located in the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas region with approximately 32,000 students. One-hundred-five students were surveyed.

Participants were limited to those attending the meetings at which the survey was administered, therefore representing a convenience sample. Each received an informed consent form, stating the purpose of the research. Questionnaires were collected as they were completed.

### Procedures for the Collection of Data

Approval for use of the instrument was obtained from the University of North Texas (UNT) Institutional Review Board (Appendix A) by submitting the instrument and an Informed Consent Form for participant use (Appendix B).

The SACQ and Informed Consent Forms were distributed and collected at Greek chapter and council meetings at the University. Students in attendance at selected meetings were given the opportunity to participate or could elect to decline participation. To achieve diversity among the participants, selected meetings reflected gender and racial differences.

## Data Analysis

Although the SACQ offers three possible approaches to administering and scoring the instrument, this research utilized the paper-and-pencil version and used computer-scannable answer sheets combined with computerized scoring. Completed surveys were mailed to Western Psychological Services (WPS), where a test report was generated and returned.

The computer report generated by WPS provided the following for each participant: (a) full scale and subscale scores; (b) a breakdown of each subscale into item clusters that represent aspects of each adjustment area; (c) calculation of *t*-scores and percentile rank equivalents; and (d) graphic displays of the results.

Demographic information is reported by the researcher first, followed by an analysis of the instrument subscales related to the research questions. The *t*-test calculations are used in this study as raw scores and percentile rankings. A *t*-test is a random variable that uses the standard deviation *of the sample* to help determine characteristics of the *larger group* it represents. The *t*-scores are used to express the test scores in relation to the standardized sample. In the standardized sample, *t*-scores have a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. Thus, with 50 as an average, *t*-scores of 40 and 30 are regarded as low and extremely low, and scores of 60 and 70 are viewed as high or very high, respectively (Baker & Siryk, 1999).

The Profile Form generated by WPS made it easy to identify high and low scores for each participant. Percentile rank equivalents for raw scores were utilized. This percentile score identifies the number of individuals in 100 who scored at or below the

score of the participant. Further, a percentile score of 90 means that 90% of the students in the normative sample scored at or below the participant's score, and only 10% scored higher, indicating that the student is well adjusted to college. A percentile score of 15 indicates that that only 15% of students in the normative sample scored at or below the participant's score and 85% scored higher, revealing that the student is likely to be less well adjusted to college (Baker & Siryk, 1999).

The analysis of the research questions is specified below:

Research Question 1: *What is the college adjustment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?*

A *t*-test determined how the participant sample scored in relation to the standardized sample.

Research Question 2: *What is the academic adjustment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?*

A *t*-test determined how the participant sample scored in relation to the standardized sample.

Research Question 3: *What is the social adjustment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?*

A *t*-test determined how the participant sample scored in relation to the standardized sample.

Research Question 4: *What is the personal-emotional adjustment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?*

A *t*-test determined how the participant sample scored in relation to the standardized sample.

Research Question 5: *What is the institutional attachment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?*

A *t*-test determined how the participant sample scored in relation to the standardized sample.

Research Question 6: *What is the college adjustment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?*

A *t*-test determined how the participant sample scored in relation to the standardized sample.

Research Question 7: *What is the academic adjustment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?*

A *t*-test determined how the participant sample scored in relation to the standardized sample.

Research Question 8: *What is the social adjustment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?*

A *t*-test determined how the participant sample scored in relation to the standardized sample.

Research Question 9: *What is the personal-emotional adjustment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?*

A *t*-test determined how the participant sample scored in relation to the standardized sample.



Research Question 10: *What is the goal commitment-institutional attachment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?*

A  $t$ -test determined how the participant sample scored in relation to the standardized sample.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the data collected for the study. The first section presents the demographic characteristics of the 80 research participants, whose questionnaires were usable. The second section contains the results of the questionnaires in relation to each research question.

#### Sample

A total of 105 university students participated in the study. However, only 80 questionnaires met the criteria established for accurate scoring.

The demographics of the participants were as follows:

Of the 80 participants, 60% were female; 40% were male. See Table 1.

Table 1

#### *Gender*

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	48	60
Male	32	40
Total	80	100

Of the 80 participants, 54 were White (67.5%). Other ethnicities reported in the study were Black ( $n=12$ , 15%), Hispanic ( $n=10$ , 12.5%), Asian ( $n=1$ , 1.2%), and 3 identified themselves as "Other" (3.8%). See Table 2.

Table 2

*Ethnicity*

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percentage
White	54	67.5
Black	12	15.0
Hispanic	10	12.5
Asian	1	1.2
Other	3	3.8
Total	80	100.0

Of the 48 female participants, 35 were White (72.9%), 6 were Black (12.5%), 4 were Hispanic (8.3%), and 3 were "Other" (6.3%). See Table 3. Of the 32 male participants, 19 were White (59.4%), 6 were Black (18.8%), 6 were Hispanic (18.8%), and 1 was Asian (3.1%). See Table 4.

Table 3

*Ethnicity of Female Participants*

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percentage
White	35	72.9
Black	6	12.5
Hispanic	4	8.3
Asian	0	0.0
Other	3	6.3
Total	48	100.0

Table 4

*Ethnicity of Male Participants*

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percentage
White	19	59.4
Black	6	18.8
Hispanic	6	18.8
Asian	1	3.1
Other	0	0.0
Total	32	100.1

Students classified as juniors accounted for 29 of the respondents (36.3%). The remainder of the participants identified themselves as freshmen ( $n=7$ , 8.8%), sophomores ( $n=19$ , 23.8%), juniors ( $n=29$ , 36.3%), and seniors ( $n=25$ , 31.3%). See Table 5.

Table 5

*Classification*

Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Freshmen	7	8.8
Sophomores	19	23.8
Juniors	29	36.3
Seniors	25	31.3
Total	80	100.2

Of the 48 female participants, 4 were freshmen (8.3%), 15 were sophomores (31.3%), 18 were juniors (37.5%) and 11 were seniors (22.9). See Table 6. Of the 32 male participants, there were 3 freshmen (9.4%), 4 sophomores (12.5%), 11 juniors (34.4%), and 14 seniors (43.8%). See Table 7.

Table 6

*Classification of Female Participants*

Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Freshmen	4	8.3
Sophomores	15	31.3
Juniors	18	37.5
Seniors	11	22.9
Total	48	100.0

Table 7

*Classification of Male Participants*

Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Freshmen	3	9.4
Sophomores	4	12.5
Juniors	11	34.4
Seniors	14	43.8
Total	32	100.1

Students majoring in Business accounted for 21 of the respondents (26.3%). Other fields of study identified were Undecided ( $n=1$ , 1.3%), Education ( $n=9$ , 11.3%), Fine Arts ( $n=8$ , 10%), Health Sciences ( $n=3$ , 3.8%), Humanities ( $n=3$ , 3.8%), Math/Computer Sciences ( $n=1$ , 1.3%), Social Science ( $n=7$ , 8.8%), Other ( $n=15$ , 18.8%), Business/Fine Arts ( $n=3$ , 3.8%), Education/Fine Arts ( $n=1$ , 1.3%), and 10% did no respond (8). See Table 8.

Table 8

*College Major*

Major	Frequency	Percentage
Undecided	1	1.3
Business	21	26.3
Education	9	11.3
Engineering	0	0.0
Fine Arts	8	10.0
Health Sciences	3	3.8
Humanities	3	3.7
Math/Computer Science	1	1.3
Social Science	7	8.8
Other	15	18.8
Business/Fine Arts	3	3.8
Education/Fine Arts	1	1.3
No response	8	10.0
Total	80	100.5

Of the 48 female participants, 2% were Undecided (1) regarding their major. The remainder identified their major as Business ( $n=9$ ; 18.8%), Education ( $n=7$ ; 14.6%), Fine Arts ( $n=6$ ; 12.5%), Health Sciences ( $n=3$ ; 6.3%), Humanities ( $n=3$ ; 6.3%), Social Science ( $n=4$ ; 8.3%), Other ( $n=9$ ; 18.8%), Business/Fine Arts ( $n=1$ ; 2.1%), and 10.4% did not respond (5). See Table 9.

Table 9

*College Majors of Female Participants*

Major	Frequency	Percentage
Undecided	1	2.0
Business	9	18.8
Education	7	14.6
Engineering	0	0.0
Fine Arts	6	12.5
Health Sciences	3	6.3
Humanities	3	6.3
Math/Computer Science	0	0.0
Social Science	4	8.3
Other	9	18.8
Business/Fine Arts	1	2.1
Education/Fine Arts	0	0.0
No response	5	10.4
Total	48	100.2

The 32 male participants identified their majors as Business ( $n=12$ ; 37.5%), Education ( $n=2$ ; 6.3%), Fine Arts ( $n=2$ ; 6.3%), Math/Computer Science ( $n=1$ ; 3.1%), Social Science ( $n=3$ ; 9.4%), Other ( $n=6$ ; 18.8%), Business/Fine Arts ( $n=2$ ; 6.3%), Education/Fine Arts ( $n=4$ ; 3.1%) and 3 (9.4%) did not respond. See Table 10.

Table 10

*College Majors of Male Participants*

Major	Frequency	Percentage
Undecided	0	0.0
Business	12	37.5
Education	2	6.3
Engineering	0	0.0
Fine Arts	2	6.3
Health Sciences	0	0.0
Humanities	0	0.0
Math/Computer Science	1	3.1
Social Science	1	9.4
Other	3	18.8
Business/Fine Arts	2	6.3
Education/Fine Arts	1	3.1
No response	3	9.4
Total	32	100.2

Students reporting a "B" Grade Average accounted for 20 of the 80 respondents (25%). Participants self-reported grade averages as "A" ( $n=10$ , 12.5%), "A-" ( $n=8$ , 10%), "B+" ( $n=19$ , 23.8%), "B" ( $n=20$ , 25%), "B-" ( $n=2$ , 2.5%), "C+" ( $n=13$ , 16.3%), and "C" ( $n=1$ , 1.3%). See Table 11.

Table 11

*Self-Reported Grade Averages*

Grade Average	Frequency	Percentage
A	10	12.5
A-	8	10.0
B+	19	23.8
B	20	25.0
B-	2	2.5
C+	13	16.3
C-	1	1.3
C	0	0.0
D	0	0.0
F	0	0.0
No response	7	8.8
Total	80	100.2

Of the 48 female participants, 12.5% reported a grade average of "A" (6). The remainder reported grade averages of "A-" ( $n=7$ , 14.6%), "B+" ( $n=15$ , 31.3%), "B" ( $n=8$ , 16.7%), "B-" ( $n=1$ , 2.1%), "C+" ( $n=5$ , 10.4%), and "C" ( $n=1$ , 2.1%). See Table 12.

Table 12

*Self-Reported Grade Averages by Female Participants*

Grade Average	Frequency	Percentage
A	6	12.5
A-	7	14.6
B+	15	31.3
B	8	16.7
B-	1	2.1
C+	5	10.4
C-	1	2.1
C	0	0.0
D	0	0.0
F	0	0.0
No response	5	10.4
Total	48	100.1



Of the 32 male participants, 12.5% reported a grade average of "A" (4). The remainder reported grade averages of "A-" ( $n=1$ , 3.1%), "B+" ( $n=4$ , 12.5%), "B" ( $n=12$ , 37.5%), "B-" ( $n=1$ , 3.1%), and "C+" ( $n=8$ , 25%). See Table 13.

Table 13

*Self-Reported Grade Averages by Male Participants*

Grade Average	Frequency	Percentage
A	4	12.5
A-	1	3.1
B+	4	12.5
B	12	37.5
B-	1	3.1
C+	8	25.0
C-	0	0.0
C	0	0.0
D	0	0.0
F	0	0.0
No response	2	6.3
Total	32	100.0

### Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the college adjustment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?

The  $t$ -tests for all male participants revealed an overall  $t$ -score of 49, reflecting the full score. With a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10, the full scale score of 49 was average in relation to the standardized sample. The male group of participants scored in the 46<sup>th</sup> percentile, indicating that 46% of students in the normative sample scored at or below the participant group score.

Research Question 2: What is the academic adjustment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?

The  $t$ -tests for all male participants revealed an overall  $t$ -score of 49, reflecting the academic adjustment subscale score. With a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10, the academic adjustment subscale score of 49 was average in relation to the standardized sample. The male group of participants scored in the 46<sup>th</sup> percentile, indicating that 46% of students in the normative sample scored at or below the participant group score.

Research Question 3: What is the social adjustment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?

The  $t$ -tests for all male participants revealed an overall  $t$ -score of 54, reflecting the social adjustment subscale score. With a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10, the social adjustment subscale score of 54 was average in relation to the standardized sample.

The male group of participants scored in the 66<sup>th</sup> percentile, indicating that 66% of students in the normative sample scored at or below the participant group score.

Research Question 4: What is the personal-emotional adjustment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?

The  $t$ -tests for all male participants revealed an overall  $t$ -score of 45, reflecting the personal-emotional subscale score. With a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10, the personal-emotional subscale score of 45 was average in relation to the standardized sample. The male group of participants scored in the 31<sup>st</sup> percentile, indicating that 31% of students in the normative sample scored at or below the participant group score.

Research Question 5: What is the institutional attachment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?

The  $t$ -tests for all male participants revealed an overall  $t$ -score of 49, reflecting the institutional attachment subscale score. With a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10, the institutional attachment subscale score of 49 was average in relation to the standardized sample. The male group of participants scored in the 46<sup>th</sup> percentile, indicating that 46% of students in the normative sample scored at or below the participant group score.

Research Question 6: What is the college adjustment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?

The  $t$ -tests for all female participants revealed an overall  $t$ -score of 55, reflecting the full score. With a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10, the full scale score of 55 was average in relation to the standardized sample. The female group of participants scored in the 69<sup>th</sup> percentile, indicating that 69% of students in the normative sample scored at or below the participant group score.

Research Question 7: What is the academic adjustment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?

The  $t$ -tests for all female participants revealed an overall  $t$ -score of 53, reflecting the academic adjustment subscale score. With a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10, the academic adjustment subscale score of 53 was average in relation to the standardized sample. The female group of participants scored in the 62<sup>nd</sup> percentile,

indicating that 62% of students in the normative sample scored at or below the participant group score.

Research Question 8: What is the social adjustment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?

The  $t$ -tests for all female participants revealed an overall  $t$ -score of 58, reflecting the social adjustment subscale score. With a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10, the social adjustment subscale score of 58 was average in relation to the standardized sample. The female group of participants scored in the 79<sup>th</sup> percentile, indicating that 79% of students in the normative sample scored at or below the participant group score.

Research Question 9: What is the personal-emotional adjustment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?

The  $t$ -tests for all female participants revealed an overall  $t$ -score of 47, reflecting the personal-emotional adjustment subscale score. With a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10, the personal-emotional subscale score of 47 was average in relation to the standardized sample. The female group of participants scored in the 38<sup>th</sup> percentile, indicating that 38% of students in the normative sample scored at or below the participant group score.

Research Question 10: What is the institutional attachment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?

The  $t$ -tests for all female participants revealed an overall  $t$ -score of 57, reflecting the institutional attachment subscale score. With a mean of 50 and a standard

deviation of 10, the institutional attachment subscale score of 57 was average in relation to the standardized sample. The female group of participants scored in the 76<sup>th</sup> percentile, indicating that 76% of students in the normative sample scored at or below the participant group score.

While both gender groups scored average in relation to the standardized sample, female participants scored higher than male students in all areas of testing (See table 14). Lower scores were revealed in both the full score and all subscale scores for male participants (See table 15).

Table 14

*The t-test Results of Female Participant Group*

Subscale	<i>t</i> -score	Percentile Ranking
Academic subscale	53	62%
Social subscale	58	79%
Personal-emotional subscale	47	38%
Institutional attachment subscale	57	76%
Full Score	55	69%

Table 15

*The t-test Results of Male Participant Group*

Subscale	<i>t</i> -score	Percentile Ranking
Academic subscale	49	46%
Social subscale	54	66%
Personal-emotional subscale	45	31%
Institutional attachment subscale	49	46%
Full Score	49	46%

Both male and female gender groups scored within the standard deviation of the standardized sample. Further, when reviewed individually, a high majority scored as average or above average (91%) in the level of full scale adjustment. Of the 80

participants, 22 had exceptionally high full scores and 16 students scored exceptionally high on the academic subscale, 34 on the social subscale, 7 on the personal-emotional subscale, and 32 on the institutional attachment subscale (See Table 16). The same students could score high on more than one subscale.

Table 16

*Individual Participants with Exceptionally High Scores*

Subscale	<i>n=80</i>	Percentage
Academic subscale	16	20.0%
Social subscale	34	43.0%
Personal-emotional subscale	7	8.8%
Institutional attachment subscale	32	40.0%
Full Score	22	28.0%

When reviewed by gender, 14 of the 48 female students (29.2%) had exceptionally high full scores (the highest being a *t*-score of 81), indicating a high level of adjustment to college. Ten scored exceptionally high on the academic subscale (the highest being a *t*-score of 80), 22 on the social subscale (the highest being four individual *t*-scores of 77), 5 on the personal-emotional subscale (the highest being a *t*-score of 65), and 20 on the institutional attachment subscale (the highest being a *t*-score of 78) (See Table 17).

Table 17

*Individual Female Participants with Exceptionally High Scores*

Subscale	<i>n=48</i>	Percentage
Academic subscale	10	21.0%
Social subscale	22	46.0%
Personal-emotional subscale	5	10.0%
Institutional attachment subscale	20	42.0%
Full Score	14	29.2%

Of the 32 male participants, 8 (25%) had exceptionally high full scores (the highest being a  $t$ -score of 77), indicating a high level of adjustment to college. Six scored exceptionally high on the academic subscale (the highest being a  $t$ -score of 69), 12 on the social subscale (the highest being two individual  $t$ -scores of 81), 2 on the personal-emotional subscale (the highest being a  $t$ -score of 68), and 12 on the institutional attachment subscale (the highest being two individual  $t$ -scores of 78) (See Table 18).

Table 18

*Individual Male Participants with Exceptionally High Scores*

Subscale	$n=32$	Percentage
Academic subscale	6	18.8%
Social subscale	12	38.0%
Personal-emotional subscale	2	6.3%
Institutional attachment subscale	12	38.0%
Full Score	8	25.0%

While 91% of the participants scored as average or above average in full scale adjustment, eight students revealed low full scale scores, indicating the possibility of poor college adjustment. Additionally, of the 80 participants, 7 scored exceptionally low on the academic subscale, 1 on the social subscale, 18 on the personal-emotional subscale, and 1 on the institutional attachment subscale (See Table 19). The same students could score low on more than one subscale.

Table 19

*Individual Participants with Exceptionally Low Scores*

Subscale	<i>n</i> =80	Percentage
Academic subscale	7	8.8%
Social subscale	1	1.3%
Personal-emotional subscale	18	23.0%
Institutional attachment subscale	1	1.3%
Full Score	8	10.0%

When reviewed by gender, only one of the 48 female students had an exceptionally low full score (the lowest being a *t*-score of 38), indicating poor adjustment to college. One scored exceptionally low on the academic subscale (with a *t*-score of 37), none on the social subscale, 1 on the personal-emotional subscale (the lowest being a *t*-score of 22), and none on the institutional attachment subscale (See Table 20).

Table 20

*Individual Female Participants with Exceptionally Low Scores*

Subscale	<i>n</i> =48	Percentage
Academic subscale	1	2.5%
Social subscale	0	0.0%
Personal-emotional subscale	5	12.5%
Institutional attachment subscale	0	0.0%
Full Score	1	2.5%

Of the 32 male participants, 7 (21.8%) had exceptionally low full scores (the lowest being a *t*-score of 34), indicating poor adjustment to college. Six scored exceptionally low on the academic subscale (the lowest being a *t*-score of 29), one on the social subscale (with a *t*-score of 35), 13 on the personal-emotional subscale (the



lowest being a  $t$ -score of 26), and 1 on the institutional attachment subscale (with a  $t$ -score of 38) (See Table 21).

Table 21

*Individual Male Participants with Exceptionally Low Scores*

Subscale	$n=32$	Percentage
Academic subscale	6	18.8%
Social subscale	1	3.1%
Personal-emotional subscale	13	41.0%
Institutional attachment subscale	1	3.1%
Full score	7	21.8%

As stated earlier, female group scores were consistently higher than the scores of the male participant group. This is true for full scale scores (See Table 22), academic subscale scores (See Table 23), social subscale scores (See Table 24), personal-emotional subscale scores (See Table 25), and institutional attachment subscale scores (See Table 26).

Table 22

*Gender  $t$ -score Comparisons for the Full Score*

Gender	$t$ -score	Percentile Ranking
Female	55	69%
Male	49	46%

Table 23

*Gender  $t$ -score Comparisons for the Academic Subscale*

Gender	$t$ -score	Percentile Ranking
Female	53	62%
Male	49	46%

Table 24

*Gender t-score Comparisons for the Social Subscale*

Gender	<i>t</i> -score	Percentile Ranking
Female	58	79%
Male	54	66%

Table 25

*Gender t-score Comparisons for the Personal-Emotional Subscale*

Gender	<i>t</i> -score	Percentile Ranking
Female	47	38%
Male	45	31%

Table 26

*Gender t-score Comparisons for the Institutional Attachment Subscale*

Gender	<i>t</i> -score	Percentile Ranking
Female	57	76%
Male	49	46%

While female participants scored higher on each subscale, scores further revealed that females scored higher on each item cluster within the subscales as well. Nine responses were possible for each item; each item response received a score of one to nine. The higher response (closer to 9) indicates a higher level of adjustment and a lower response (closer to one) indicates a lower level of adjustment.

The Academic Adjustment subscale was classified in four clusters: motivation, application, performance, and academic environment. Female participants scored higher on all clusters of the Academic Adjustment subscale (See Tables 25-28).

The Motivation cluster of the Academic Adjustment subscale represents attitudes toward academic goals and the academic work required, motivation for being in college

and for doing academic work, and the sense of educational purpose (Baker & Siryk, 1999) (See Table 27).

Table 27

*Raw Score Comparisons: Academic Adjustment Subscale, Motivation Cluster*

Gender	Raw Score
Female	7.72
Male	6.58
Average	7.15

The Application cluster of the Academic Adjustment subscale represents how well motivation is being translated into actual academic effort and how successfully students are applying themselves to academic work and meeting academic requirements (Baker & Siryk, 1999) (See Table 28).

Table 28

*Raw Score Comparisons: Academic Adjustment Subscale, Application Cluster*

Gender	Raw Score
Female	6.26
Male	5.43
Average	5.85

The Performance cluster of the Academic Adjustment subscale represents the success of academic effort as reflected in various aspects of academic performance and the effectiveness of academic functioning (Baker & Siryk, 1999) (See Table 29).

Table 29

*Raw Score Comparisons: Academic Adjustment Subscale, Performance Cluster*

Gender	Raw Score
Female	5.46
Male	5.20
Average	5.33

The Academic Environment cluster of the Academic Adjustment subscale represents the satisfaction with the academic environment and what it offers (Baker & Siryk, 1999) (See Table 30).

Table 30

*Raw Score Comparisons: Academic Adjustment Subscale, Academic Environment Cluster*

Gender	Raw Score
Female	7.42
Male	6.76
Average	7.09

The Social Adjustment subscale is classified in four clusters as well: general, other people, nostalgia, and social environment. Female participants scored higher on all clusters of the Social Adjustment subscale (See Tables 31-34).

The General cluster of the Social Adjustment subscale represents the extent and success of social activities and functioning in general (Baker & Siryk, 1999) (See Table 31).

Table 31

*Raw Score Comparisons: Social Adjustment Subscale, General Cluster*

Gender	Raw Score
Female	8.25
Male	7.88
Average	8.07

The Other People cluster of the Social Adjustment subscale represents involvement and relationships with other people on campus (Baker & Siryk, 1999) (See Table 32).

Table 32

*Raw Score Comparisons: Social Adjustment Subscale, Other People Cluster*

Gender	Raw Score
Female	7.26
Male	6.89
Average	7.08

The Nostalgia cluster of the Social Adjustment subscale represents how students are dealing with social relocation, being away from home, and being separated from significant relationships from home (Baker & Siryk, 1999) (See Table 33).

Table 33

*Raw Score Comparisons: Social Adjustment Subscale, Nostalgia Cluster*

Gender	Raw Score
Female	7.17
Male	6.87
Average	7.02

The Social Environment cluster of the Social Adjustment subscale represents the satisfaction with social aspects of the college environment (Baker & Siryk, 1999) (See Table 34).

Table 34

*Raw Score Comparisons: Social Adjustment Subscale, Social Environment Cluster*

Gender	Raw Score
Female	7.76
Male	7.26
Average	7.51

The Personal-Emotional Adjustment subscale is classified into two clusters: psychological and physical. Female participants scored higher on all clusters of the Personal-Emotional Adjustment subscale (See Tables 35 and 36).

The Psychological cluster of the Personal-Emotional Adjustment subscale represents the sense of psychological well-being (Baker & Siryk, 1999) (See Table 35).

Table 35

*Raw Score Comparisons: Personal-Emotional Adjustment Subscale, Psychological Cluster*

Gender	Raw Score
Female	5.75
Male	5.30
Average	5.53

The Physical cluster of the Personal-Emotional Adjustment subscale represents the sense of physical well-being (Baker & Siryk, 1999) (See Table 36).

Table 36

*Raw Score Comparisons: Personal-Emotional Adjustment Subscale, Physical Cluster*

Gender	Raw Score
Female	5.99
Male	5.84
Average	5.92

The Institutional Attachment subscale is classified in two clusters: “general” and “this college.” Female participants scored higher on all clusters of the Institutional Attachment subscale (See Tables 37 and 38).

The General cluster of the Institutional Attachment subscale represents the feelings about, or the degree of satisfaction with, being in college in general (Baker & Siryk, 1999) (See Table 37).

Table 37

*Raw Score Comparisons: Institutional Attachment Subscale, General Cluster*

Gender	Raw Score
Female	8.70
Male	7.61
Average	8.16

This College cluster of the Institutional Attachment subscale represents the feelings about, or the degree of satisfaction with, attending the particular institution at which the student is currently enrolled (Baker & Siryk, 1999) (See Table 38).

Table 38

*Raw Score Comparisons: Institutional Attachment Subscale, This College Cluster*

Gender	Raw Score
Female	8.07
Male	7.17
Average	7.62

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

This study examined the college adjustment of students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations, specifically by gender. The purposes of this study were to: (a) identify the college adjustment of students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations according to gender; (b) identify the academic adjustment of students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations according to gender; (c) identify the social adjustment of students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations according to gender; (d) identify the personal-emotional adjustment of students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations according to gender; and (e) identify the institutional attachment of students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations according to gender.

This chapter concludes the study in four sections. The first section summarizes the findings of the study; the second section discusses those findings; the third section draws general conclusions from the study; and the fourth section offers recommendations for future research and practice in relation to college adjustment and fraternity and sorority members.



## Summary of Findings

The summary of findings is presented in seven sections. The first section summarizes the findings of the demographic information of students who participated in the study. The second section summarizes the findings of the full scale adjustment of male and female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations. The third section summarizes the findings of the academic adjustment of students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations. The fourth section summarizes the findings of the social adjustment of students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations. The fifth section summarizes the findings of the personal-emotional adjustment of students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations. The sixth section summarizes the findings of the institutional attachment of students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations. The seventh section summarizes the findings of participants with extremely high scores and extremely low scores.

### *Summary of Demographic Data*

The majority of the participants of this study were female (60%); 40% were male.

Regarding students' ethnicity, a majority were Caucasian (67.5%); 15% were Black; 12.5% were Hispanic; 3.8% identified themselves as "Other"; 1.2% were Asian.

Most of the participants were juniors (36.3%); 31.3% were seniors; 23.8% were sophomores; 8.8% were freshmen.

Most of the participants were Business majors (26.3%); 11.3% were Education majors; 10% were Fine Arts majors; 8.8% were Social Science majors; 3.8% were Health Sciences majors; 3.8% were Business/Fine Arts majors; 3.7% were Humanities majors; 1.3% were Undecided; 1.3% were Math/Computer Science majors; 1.3% were Education/Fine Arts majors; 10% did not respond.

Regarding self-reported grade point averages, most of the participants reported "B" grade point averages (25%); 23.8% "B+"; 16.3% "C+"; 12.5% "A"; 10.0% "A-"; 2.5% "B-"; 1.3% "C-"; 8.8% did not respond.

#### *Full Scale College Adjustment of Students Affiliated with Social Greek-Letter Organizations*

Representing the full scale college adjustment, the 32 male participants had an overall  $t$ -score of 49 and ranked in the 46<sup>th</sup> percentile. The 48 female participants had an overall  $t$ -score of 55 and ranked in the 69<sup>th</sup> percentile. Full scale scores for both male and female participant groups were average in relation to the standardized sample. The  $t$ -scores had a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10; therefore, all  $t$ -scores falling between 40 and 60 are considered average in comparison to the standardized sample.

#### *Academic Adjustment of Students Affiliated with Social Greek-Letter Organizations*

For the academic adjustment subscale, the 32 male participants revealed an overall  $t$ -score of 49 and ranked in the 46<sup>th</sup> percentile. The 48 female participants revealed an overall  $t$ -score of 53 and ranked in the 62<sup>nd</sup> percentile. Academic

adjustment subscale scores for both male and female participant groups were average in relation to the standardized sample.

*Social Adjustment of Students Affiliated with Social Greek-Letter Organizations*

For the social adjustment subscale, the 32 male participants revealed an overall  $t$ -score of 54 and ranked in the 66<sup>th</sup> percentile. The 48 female participants revealed an overall  $t$ -score of 58 and ranked in the 79<sup>th</sup> percentile. Social adjustment subscale scores for both male and female participant groups were average in relation to the standardized sample.

*Personal-Emotional Adjustment of Students  
Affiliated with Social Greek-Letter Organizations*

For the personal-emotional adjustment subscale, the 32 male participants revealed an overall  $t$ -score of 45 and ranked in the 31<sup>st</sup> percentile. The 48 female participants revealed an overall  $t$ -score of 47 and ranked in the 38<sup>th</sup> percentile. Personal-emotional adjustment subscale scores for both male and female participant groups were average in relation to the standardized sample.

*Institutional Attachment for Students  
Affiliated with Social Greek-Letter Organizations*

For the institutional attachment subscale, the 32 male participants revealed an overall  $t$ -score of 49 and ranked in the 46<sup>th</sup> percentile. The 48 female participants revealed an overall  $t$ -score of 57 and ranked in the 76<sup>th</sup> percentile. Institutional

attachment subscale scores for both male and female participant groups were average in relation to the standardized sample.

### *Scores Qualifying as Extremely High or Extremely Low*

Individual scores qualifying as extremely high were more than one standard deviation above the mean compared to the standardized sample. In this study, extremely high scores were those with full scale *t*-scores of more than 60. Of the 32 male participants, 8 (25%) had extremely high scores, indicating a high level of overall college adjustment. Of the 48 female participants, 14 (29%) had extremely high scores.

Individual scores qualifying as extremely low were more than one standard deviation below the mean compared to the standardized sample. In this study, extremely low scores were those with a full scale *t*-score of less than 40. Of the 32 male participants, 7 (22%) had extremely low scores, indicating possible adjustment problems. Of the 48 female participants, only 1 (2%) scored extremely low on the full scale adjustment.

For the individual subscales, some students also scored extremely high or extremely low on particular measures. These extremes are indicated by *t*-scores on each scale above 60 and below 40. As in the full scale adjustment, extremely high scores indicate a high level of adjustment; low scores indicate possible adjustment problems.

For the academic subscale, 21% of the female participants and 18.8% of the male participants scored extremely high; 2.5% of the females and 18.8% of the males scored extremely low. For the social subscale, 46% of the female participants and 38% of the male participants scored extremely high; 0% of the females and 3.1% of the males scored extremely low. For the personal-emotional subscale, 10% of the female participants and 6.3% of the male participants scored extremely high; 12.5% of the females and 41% of the males scored extremely low. Finally, for the institutional attachment subscale, 42% of the female participants and 38% of the male participants scored extremely high; 0% of the females and 3.1% of the males scored extremely low.

### Discussion of Findings

The study's ten research questions called for examinations of the overall, academic, social, and personal-emotional adjustment to college along with the institutional attachment of students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations. It is important to understand the impact membership in a Greek organization may have for fraternity and sorority members as they seek to make positive adjustments to college life. The five areas of focus in this study are important individually and collectively in identifying levels of adjustment. Each area scored holds value as being a key indicator of college student adaptability.

Specifically, the research questions that directed this research are these:

- 1) What is the college adjustment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?

- 2) What is the academic adjustment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?
- 3) What is the social adjustment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?
- 4) What is the personal-emotional adjustment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?
- 5) What is the institutional attachment of male students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?
- 6) What is the college adjustment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?
- 7) What is the academic adjustment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?
- 8) What is the social adjustment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?
- 9) What is the personal-emotional adjustment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?
- 10) What is the institutional attachment of female students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations?

Having restated the research questions, what follows is a discussion of the findings reported in this paper. The majority of college student involvement literature is based on Astin's (1985) theory of involvement. Believing that students learn by becoming "involved," Astin defines this involvement as the investment of physical and

psychological time and energy into activities, tasks, and people. Further, greater involvement by students in college leads to greater learning and personal development (Astin, 1985). Because many colleges and universities now make it part of their mission to promote student learning, leadership and personal development, studies of student leadership development are understandably important (Boatman, 1999).

According to Astin (1993), the strongest indicator of leadership is associated with student-to-student interaction. Students who interact frequently with peers tend to show an increase in leadership development. Students who lack interaction with peers tend to show a decrease in leadership development. Astin defined student-to-student interaction as: discussing course content with other students, working on group projects in courses, tutoring other students, participating in intramural sports, being a member of a fraternity or sorority, discussing racial or ethnic issues, socializing with others from different racial or ethnic groups, participating in campus protests, being elected to student offices, and hours per week spent socializing or in student clubs or organizations (Astin, 1993). Additionally, an indicator of leadership is involvement in campus activities including fraternity and sorority membership, participation in intramural sports, volunteer activities, and tutoring other students.

The results of this study in terms of the full scale adjustment and subscale adjustments neither refute nor support Astin's theory. The full scale adjustment and all four subscale scores for both fraternity and sorority members were average, when compared to the standardized sample, with no indications of statistical significance. While some weighed close to the top or bottom of one standard deviation from the

mean, all combined scores for both genders managed to fall within the norm. This study simply focused on examining the adjustment levels of Greek students, not comparing the levels to non-Greek students. Therefore, the next question to consider might be whether or not membership in a Greek organization impacted the individual scores or not. Would the scores for the participants have been the same if the students had not been fraternity or sorority members? While scores may have been similar for members of other student organizations, historical research makes it seem likely that students with higher levels of involvement would be more likely to score higher than those who are not involved, thus displaying a greater level of adjustment.

Scholars admit it is difficult to evaluate student gains from involvement alone, because students learn about involvement in a variety of ways (Pankanin, 1995). For example, not all student organization presidents have the same experiences or opportunities, nor do they achieve the same developmental gains. The environment may create differences, as well as other students with whom the president interacts. The impact of a student's involvement experiences is determined by the amount and quality of the individual student's effort (Pankanin, 1995). The impact of a student's involvement also is a direct reflection of the extent to which students connect to a network of people, leadership positions, facilities, and a variety of opportunities provided by the institution (Hernandez, et. al., 1999).

According to this study, men consistently score lower on all scales than women, indicating a lower level of college adjustment. Male participants collectively and individually score lower in full scale adjustment, academic adjustment, social



adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment. However, it should be noted that as a whole, the male participant group scored average in relation to the standardized sample. It is prudent to consider reasons for the lower scores of male participants compared to the scores of their female counterparts.

According to Davis and Laker (2004), there is significant evidence that college males struggle. Further, there exists a lack of engagement of college men in student affairs and academic affairs programs and services. Capraro (2000) states that, “men outnumber women in virtually every category of drinking behavior used in research for comparison—prevalence, consumption, frequency of drinking and intoxication, incidence of heavy and problem drinking, alcohol abuse and dependence, and alcoholism” (p.308). Additionally, Farrell (1993) reports that men are most often the victims of violence in all categories except sexual assault. Finally, research identifies suicide as the third leading cause of death among males age fifteen to twenty-four, a statistic four times the rate of young women (National Center for Injury and Prevention and Control, 2006).

Some have identified “gender-role conflict” as having an impact on the development of men (Davis & Laker, 2004; Oneil, 1981, 1990). Gender-role conflict is defined as a “psychological state in which socialized gender roles have negative consequences on a person or others” (Stillson, Oneil, and Owen, 1991, p. 458). To understand gender-role conflict, student affairs professionals need to understand the routine socialization men receive in American culture (Davis & Laker, 2004). “The phrase, ‘be a man,’ for example, serves to restrict men’s full range of emotionality”

(Davis & Laker, 2004, p.50). Therefore, research suggests that this socialization process may hinder the emotional development of boys and men (Ludeman, 2004). Further, college men are faced with a number of challenges, such as the development of competence, learning to manage emotions, developing autonomy, establishing an identity, freeing interpersonal relationships, developing a purpose, and developing integrity (Chickering, 1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993). According to Ludeman (2004), "these developmental tasks may conflict with their socialized experience and expectations of masculinity" (p. 79). For the purpose of this study, men rated the lowest on the personal-emotional subscale, ranking in the 31<sup>st</sup> percentile, revealing a consistency with historical findings. To further support the findings, Aspinwall and Taylor (1992) used cognitive adaptation theory (Taylor & Brown, 1988) to conclude the level of self-esteem to be indirectly related to college adjustment, among other factors. Ludeman (2004) concludes, "If the male socialization process indeed shapes or restricts the emotional skills and development of boys and men, then it seems likely that the demands of the college environment will create challenges for men related to their relationships and experiences on the college campus" (p. 79-80). Therefore, by empowering male students to push beyond gender barriers and seek a wider range of emotional awareness and expressiveness, student affairs professionals may spark "a self-sustaining process of critical analysis and enlightened action" (Lather, 1991, p. 75).

While the male participant group scored lower on all scales, both genders scored lowest on the personal-emotional subscale. Much of the discussion thus far has focused on college males, but the female participants should not be overlooked when

considering emotional adjustment. Although males scored in the 31<sup>st</sup> percentile, females did not score significantly higher and ranked in the 38<sup>th</sup> percentile. While this group score does not reflect statistical significance, it is worth consideration, simply because it is the lowest subscale score for females. Regardless of gender, Chickering (1969) theorized that learning to manage and express emotions effectively is a major developmental task for college-aged students. Therefore, a concerted effort to recognize the importance of college students' emotional experiences is paramount for student affairs professionals.

Previous research has been murky at best in regards to academics and Greek membership; this study does not shed any light on an argument for positive or negative impact. No statistical significance was found regarding academic adjustment. This study supports prior research (Crookston, 1960; Prusok and Walsh, 1964; Longino and Kart, 1973; Pugh and Chamberlain, 1977; Shaffer, 1983. Winston and Saunders, 1987) that contends membership in Greek organizations has minimal or no effects on academic achievement.

The greatest difference in scores by gender is reflected in the institutional attachment subscale. The male participant group scored in the 46<sup>th</sup> percentile; females scored in the 76<sup>th</sup> percentile. Neither group produced results with statistical significance. However, it would be helpful for the institution to understand why such a difference exists between the genders. Because institutional attachment can, ultimately, affect how individuals support the institution after graduation, both financially and with time, it is critical that students feel a close connection with their

alma mater. Greek members, in particular, are important to institutions in this regard. Research shows that Greek alumni are more likely to contribute financially and in greater amounts (Thorsen, 1997). As state funding continues to decrease, alumni support is increasingly important. Whether serving on an alumni board, advisory committee, or by contributing financially, Greek alumni serve as a valuable resource to institutions.

Not to be confused with parties and alcohol, the social development of college students is also important. With hopes of graduating socially adept and responsible individuals, institutions take on the role of socially educating students throughout their collegiate career. Greek organizations are no different. It comes as little surprise that both male and female participant groups scored highest on the social adjustment subscale. While not the entire mission, social Greek-letter organizations do place considerable importance on their role in the social development of members. In regards to this study, it appears that the organizations do this well; the scores reflect the highest level of adjustment in this area.

While no statistical significance was found for Greek members on any scale of adjustment, other findings as previously discussed are important for the institution. The closer an institution is to the students it serves, the more accurately programs and services can be tailored to student needs. The results of the samples can be further generalized to other populations consisting of students affiliated with social Greek-letter organizations at the institutions at which the research is conducted. Keeping this in

mind, the institution may tailor educational programming to complement the study's findings.

### Conclusions

1. Being part of the Greek community affords students more opportunities to interact with peers, interact with faculty, and participate in clubs and organizations, all of which may positively impact a student's adjustment to college.
2. Consensus among researchers is that students' involvement affects their learning and development. Further, when students become involved in their college environment, they develop and learn both inside and outside the classroom.
3. Realizing that student-to-student interaction plays a role in student development is important for student affairs professionals. This knowledge can help shape co-curricular interaction and involvement with peers that focus on specific developmental areas.
4. It is difficult to evaluate whether Greek membership plays a role in assessment or if assessment results are the same in the absence of fraternity or sorority membership.
5. Student affairs professionals have an especially significant role to play in the retention, adjustment, and psychosocial development of all students.

6. Student development professionals must recognize the importance of the emotional experience of college students and develop systems and processes that encourage emotional exploration, expression, and development.
7. Student affairs professionals, when seeking to understand college men, must understand the social construction of masculinity and the pressure for men to conform to these standards. The gender lines existing for men may reinforce their restricted emotionality. This understanding of men's development will help student affairs professionals more effectively connect men to academic and student services.
8. Greek life professionals should create discussion with fraternity men about the impact of gender role conflict on how and under what conditions emotions are expressed and relationships developed
9. Student affairs professionals should work to create meaningful involvement opportunities for students, and should encourage them to become involved in student organizations.
10. The Greek community serves as a powerful vehicle for socialization.

#### Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

To expand the findings of this study, future studies needs to be conducted in the following areas:

1. This same research should be conducted in formats that allow for the tracking of students. The study could be replicated with the same group of students

at the beginning of their freshman year, at the middle of their collegiate career, and prior to graduation. Longitudinal data could indicate at which various points students demonstrate differing levels of adjustment.

2. Members of Greek-letter organizations could be surveyed two to three years following graduation regarding their feelings about the impact of the Greek experience. Alumni feedback and perspective can serve as valuable information to Greek life professionals.
3. This same instrument could be used to assess students not affiliated with Greek-letter organizations, but who are members of other student organizations. This may provide further information regarding the impact of Greek membership versus other student organization involvement.
4. This same instrument (SACQ) could be used to assess students not involved in any student organization. This may provide further information regarding the impact of student involvement in general on college adjustment.
5. Future researchers could collect self-esteem data for fraternity men longitudinally throughout the Greek experience, including during recruitment, during the new member period, and at various points after initiation. Measurements could include self-perception, level of extra-curricular participation, perceived social support, academic performance, and the attention to health and wellness.
6. Future research could focus on gathering feedback from students who withdrew their memberships from Greek organizations. This perspective

could be of assistance in identifying areas that might be addressed to provide for better experiences overall.

7. The same research could be replicated at other institutions using larger sample sizes, which might provide for greater usable data.

It is unclear whether involvement in student organizations causes development or assists with adjustment, or whether they merely coincide. Qualitative research could begin to explore the meaning behind the connections in this area, both in terms of Greek membership and general student involvement. Continued research is needed regarding the effects of Greek membership on student adjustment to college life. Since the current study was conducted at a single institution with a small convenience sample the findings cannot be generalized to the entire population. However, Greek life departments nationwide may conduct their own analyses to understand their individual needs regarding the adjustment of Greek members. Furthermore, the research findings stemming from this study may be used to provide information about Greek membership, student involvement, and gender differences.

Fraternity and sorority members, through their Greek organizations, are provided opportunities for learning and leadership development. Greek organizations also serve as an instant form of connection to institutions, which can assist in students' adjustment to college. Jakobsen (1986) wrote, "a Greek unit . . . should be viewed as an area of potentially effective influence, where students gain a sense of belonging and acceptance from friendship with peers." When these feelings are generated, it seems, then, that adjustment would be affected in a positive manner. With a history as long



and rich as that of the United States, Greek organizations appear to be a mainstay within higher education. Therefore, it should be a goal of institutions to formulate policies and enact practices regarding Greek life that both enhance the institutional mission and grow and nurture the Greek community.

APPENDIX A  
HUMAN SUBJECTS LETTER

UNIVERSITY<sup>of</sup>  
NORTH TEXAS  
*Office of Research Services*

November 1, 2005

Amy Ayers  
Department of Counseling, Development and Higher Education  
University of North Texas

RE: Human Subjects Application No. 05-300

Dear Ms. Ayers:

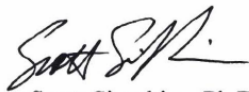
Your proposal titled "College Student Adaptability and Greek Membership: A Single Institution Case Study" has been approved by the Institutional Review Board and is exempt from further review under 45 CFR 46.101. **Federal policy 45 CFR 46.109(e) stipulates that IRB approval is for one year only.**

Enclosed is the consent document with stamped IRB approval. Please copy and **use this form only** for your study subjects.

It is your responsibility according to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regulations to submit annual and terminal progress reports to the IRB for this project. Please mark your calendar accordingly. The IRB must also review this project prior to any modifications.

Please contact Shelia Bourns, Compliance Administrator, ext. 3940 or Boyd Herndon, Director of Research Compliance, ext. 3941, if you wish to make such changes or need additional information.

Sincerely,



Scott Simpkins, Ph.D.  
Chair  
Institutional Review Board

SS:sb

P.O. Box 305250 ♦ Denton, Texas 76203-5250 ♦ (940) 565-3940  
Fax (940) 565-4277 ♦ TTY (800) RELAY TX ♦ www.unt.edu

APPENDIX B  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

University of North Texas Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Form

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose and benefits of the study and how it will be conducted.

Title of Study: College student adaptability and Greek membership: A single institution case study

Principal Investigator: Amy Ayres, a graduate student in the University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Higher Education.

**Purpose of the Study:**

The purpose of the study is to determine how membership in Greek organizations affects members' adjustment to college life.

**Study Procedures:**

You will be asked to voluntarily complete a paper and pencil survey (67 items) that will take about 20 minutes of your time. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits or rights. The participant may discontinue participation at any time.

**Foreseeable Risks:**

No foreseeable risks are involved in this study.

**Benefits to the Subjects or Others:**

This study is not expected to be of any direct benefit to you, individually. However, the results of the study may provide insight for the Office of Greek Life at UNT regarding the adjustment to college life by students affiliated with Greek organizations.

**Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records:**

All survey information is anonymous. To further protect the anonymity of participants, the signed consent forms will be kept separately from the completed surveys. Additionally, the confidentiality of your individual information will be maintained in any publications or presentations regarding the findings.

**Questions about the Study**

If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Amy Ayres at telephone number [REDACTED] or Barry Lumsden, UNT Department of Higher Education, at telephone number [REDACTED]

**Review for the Protection of Participants:**

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-3940 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

**Research Participants' Rights:**

Your signature below indicates that you have read or have had read to you all of the above and that you confirm all of the following:

Amy Ayres has explained the study to you and answered all of your questions. You have been told the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study.

- You understand that you do not have to take part in this study, and your refusal to participate or your decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your participation at any time. You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.
- You understand your rights as a research participant and you voluntarily consent to participate in this study.
- You have been told you will receive a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant


\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**For the Principal Investigator or Designee:**

I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the participant signing above. I have explained the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study. It is my opinion that the participant understood the explanation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Principal Investigator or Designee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPROVED BY THE UNT IRB  
FROM 11/1/05 TO 10/31/06  


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